

# Every Child Learning Every Day



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## READY TO LEARN

### Play books fun for kids, parents

By Dr. Stan Steiner

Play, whether it is through physical activity or through imagination, is a very important part of a child's development. Included below are some books related to play with ideas for adults and children.

**"Baby Brains: The Smartest Baby in the Whole World,"** by James, Simon, 2004, Candlewick. With roaring humor, Simon captures the parents of the precocious child. In

an elegant fashion, the parents learn that intellectual brilliance never

supersedes a child's basic needs.

**"The Toolbox,"** by Anne and Harlow Rockwell, 1971/2004, Walker. Dad's toolbox has offered fascination for generations of preschoolers. The illustrations along with minimal text clearly show each tool and its function.

**"On the Road,"** by Susan Stegall, 2005, Kane/Miller. If you are preparing for a car trip anytime soon this book would make a great introduction for talking about the trip. The amazing torn paper artwork is certain to generate some imagination about what you might see en route to your destiny.

**"Will You Carry Me?"** by Helen van Rossum, 2004/2005, Kane/Miller. This playful book is just what every parent needs for the child who begs to be carried everywhere. Your personal touch with these highly imaginative options awaits your preschooler on the next walk home from the park.

**"This Place in the Snow,"** by Rebecca Bond, 2004, Dutton. If you have lived in snow country this book will flurry up some great memories of playing outdoors in the snow. From morning until evening the entertainment a huge snow pile offers is priceless.



## Noticing sameness and difference

Dear Reader:

One of the skills preschoolers learn is the ability to discern sameness and difference. Yellow and blue are both colors, but they are different. Circles and squares are both shapes but are different from each other. And while the animals dog and cat have many characteristics that are alike, children quickly learn which features go with cat and which with dog. One of the favorite games for many preschoolers is Sesame Street's "One of these things is not like the others."

Children are also learning that people have sameness and difference too. People are large and small, tall and short, white and



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black, and so on. They will also notice if people walk different from them – with a limp or in a wheelchair.

Children's attitudes to what they perceive in people are shaped by the messages they hear from their parents, other children, and from books and television.

Two web resources ([www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org) and [www.nncc.org](http://www.nncc.org)) provide booklists and articles that can help you talk to your child about culture and diversity and the sameness and difference found there.

Children notice how things are the same and different every day. You can encourage those observations by talking with your child about what she sees.

*Marilyn Howard*

## READY TO LEARN

### Have fun with sounds in your home

Paying attention to sounds in the environment builds good listening skills that lead to learning sounds used in reading and talking, and in making predictions for science and math.

You have lots of things in the kitchen that can make different noises.

Get some containers out of the refrigerator or cupboard. You might find ketchup bottles, plastic bowls, glass jars that might be full or partly full, cans of soup, and others. Put four or five containers out on the floor or table at a time.

Have your child strike the bottles and other objects with a metal spoon, a wooden spoon, and a plastic spoon.

Write labels on several pieces of paper (loud, soft, high, low). Tap on one of the objects with each of the strikers and talk about the



sound. You can use the pieces of paper to group items. "I think this sounds loud. I'll

put it here on the LOUD paper."

Now experiment with your child and the containers, using the words you've helped your child discover to label and group the objects. You can add to this by making new sounds with the objects, by partially filling them with different amounts of water or sand.

Below are some fun sound books recommended by Reading Rockets:

**"The Very Quiet Cricket,"** by Eric Carle. A newly hatched cricket is greeted with a welcoming chirp from a bigger cricket. But when he

cannot respond, the young cricket visits other insects and listens to their sounds. Eventually, he finds his own voice in a chirp that readers hear at the end of the book. While amusing to the ears, the lush illustrations and pleasing text are a feast for the eyes.

**"I Stink!"** by Kate McMullan. "Know what I do while you're asleep?" asks a grinning truck in an opening spread: "Eat your TRASH."

This boldly illustrated book celebrates the garbage truck's noise and grinding power in a brisk, lively text filled with sound effects. The truck describes its night rounds with its crew, including an amusing A to Z of garbage, from "apple cores" to "puppy poo" to "zipped-up ziti with zucchini."



## RESOURCES

## 2-1-1 line helps answer parent questions

[www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov](http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov)

**Question: My 6-month-old baby isn't crawling yet. Is that okay?**

Answer: No need to panic. Each young brain forms the connections required for sitting and crawling, walking and talking at its own pace. Some babies never quite master the traditional crawl. Children are motivated by the desire to reach beyond themselves. Give your baby lots of stimulation through toys and objects they can reach for. If you are concerned about your child's development, call the Idaho CareLine at 2-1-1 or 1-800-926-2588 (or 208-332-7205 TTD) or the Infant and Toddler Program's Child Find Coordinator at the "local health district" in your area for a screening.

**Question: My baby does not seem to be developing at the same rate as other children. Is there someone I can talk to about special needs?**

Answer: Yes, for birth to 3 years of age, you may contact the Idaho Infant Toddler Program for an evaluation which is provided at no cost. Call the Idaho CareLine at 2-1-1 or 1-800-926-2588 (or 208-332-7205 TTD) for the phone number of the Early Intervention Specialist in your area.

**Question: My neighbor says I am spoiling my baby with too much attention. Is that possible?**

Answer: No. Studies show that newborns who are more quickly and warmly responded to when crying learn to cry less and sleep more at night. Each time you "coo" and talk with your baby, each time you soothe your baby with a quiet voice, each time you smile and play "peekaboo", her brain develops. Her entire body is involved and she is beginning to develop her own self-image.

## NUTRITION

## Start the New Year with breakfast

Start the New Year off right: Make a habit of eating breakfast.

Breakfast has long been touted as the best meal of the day for adults and children alike.

The National Food Service Management Institute's weekly newsletter says that breakfast "gets children ready to learn and maintains their well-being."

Breakfast doesn't have to be



a formal occasion for a child to reap the benefits of eating breakfast. It can be as simple as a peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich, half of an orange and a cup of milk, or it can be waffle sticks made the night before and re-heated in the microwave, a pre-packaged container of applesauce to dip them in and a half-pint carton of milk.

The important thing for parents and caregivers to remember is that breakfast needs to include age-appropriate servings of whole grains, fruit and/or vegetables, and milk.

Good choices are oatmeal, whole wheat bread products, or an enriched and fortified cereal low

in sugar.

Fruits can include: orange slices, bananas, applesauce, or 100% juices.

Infants from birth to 11 months need breastmilk or an iron-fortified infant formula.

Children age 1 to 2 need at least ½ cup of milk. Children age 3 to 5 need at least ¾ of a cup of milk.

With a little bit of planning and an easy menu, breakfast can be fun and nutritious for your young children and yourself.

Don't forget adults need breakfast, too!

Looking for recipes? Try this site: <http://www.nfsmi.org/>

## READY TO LEARN

## Build sorting, classifying skills

Learning to sort and classify objects and ideas is important for children to learn and easy to incorporate into everyday activities.

**Birth to 1 year** – It is important to describe and name objects and people. Talk about items that share common uses. For example, "It's nap time; let's find your blanket, bottle and bear;" or "It's time for day care; here is your diaper bag, your coat, and snack." Sort animal crackers with your child.

**1 to 3 years old** – At this age your child is natu-



rally matching items and clustering objects. Dry cereal such as Trix is fun to sort by colors. Say something such as, "let's put all the red ones together." Encourage the practice of sorting the toys when it's time to clean up.

**3 to 5 years old** – Your child can sort in several different ways when he is matching and sorting toys, foods, and animals. This is a great age for him to play with colored blocks or plastic colored cubes. Ask your child to help sort socks by size: big, medium, small, or by person: mom, dad, child.

**Skills needed for kindergarten** – Can identify objects that belong together in a group.

## ARTS

## Try "Draw Me Your Music" with your youngster

By Jennifer Williams  
2002 Idaho Teacher of the Year

There are few things as cute or humorous as watching preschoolers instinctively begin to dance when music is played.

The connections between arts experiences and the development of literacy are tremendous opportunities for expression, communication, problem solving, understanding, social development, and learning.

Parents can help support these connections with an activity I call "Draw Me Your Music."

Watch what happens when a

child is given paint and a large piece of butcher paper or a box of chalk and a driveway, along with a variety of music (rock, jazz, children's songs, marches and classical).

Children may begin to swing their arms with giant brush strokes, attempting to dab and dot to the beat of the music. They may sing or tell stories while creating works of art to the sounds.

During this activity, ask the child how he is feeling, how the music makes him feel, or how his paintings tell a story about the music.

Besides the obvious advantage of doing something hands-on,

children begin to acquire an appreciation or interest in music, discover new movements, communicate about the correlation of their dance to the marks on the paper, explore the visual elements of their paintings as they move to the music, develop auditory discrimination, and use music in other learning situations such as learning to read words, helping with chores, or getting dressed.

And just for fun and for a great laugh, tell your preschooler that when they are finished you will dance and paint to the music of their choice. The side benefit is working off all those holiday goodies.